

ESL Journal for Overseas Teachers

Dear Editor:

I enjoyed reading your most recent issue (vol. 32, no. 2). As a fellow editor, I was particularly interested in Malcolm Benson's article on getting published. However, I would like to point out to your readers that, in addition to the short list of ESL-related journals mentioned in the article, the *TESL Reporter* might also merit potential authors' consideration. The *TESL Reporter*, now in its 27th year of publication, is distributed in more than 70 countries, and remains free to all subscribers outside the United States (US\$6 within).

We pride ourselves on the fact that fully 50 percent of our authors live and work in countries other than the U.S. and England, and that many of them have begun their "publishing careers" with us. Like the *Forum*, we place a great premium on articles written by teachers for teachers, as our primary purpose is to serve their interests.

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Roleplaying via the *National Geographic* Magazine

Dear Editor:

Those dusty shelves of *National Geographic* magazines can be put to a new use in the English-language classroom with this roleplaying exercise. By creatively using *National Geographic* articles, students can learn more about the environment, improve their communicative speaking skills, and discover a new field of fascinating reading.

To begin, the teacher finds *National Geographic* articles that have been written from a first-person point of view and compiles a list of these articles. A scan of recent editions reveals a typical sample of rich and fascinating topics, such as "Wandering with India's Rabari," or "Labrador, Canada's Place Apart," or "New Light on the Olmec." Each student is then assigned one of the articles.

Students have to read the articles thoroughly, for they have to take on the personality of the explorer who wrote the article. Then, with the teacher as moderator, the student participates in a group interview. The student simulates the role of an explorer and has to explain the background of the adventure, the nature of the study, and the surprises encountered along the way.

To go well, the students need to be able to read at the appropriate level, and to be willing to step into another role. Some drama coaching may be necessary to assure that students act and are not themselves. For the actual "performance," only an index card is permitted as a prompt. The lesson will be forced and dull if the students are overly dependent on scripts or the original article.

Other members of the class should enter the lesson by playing the part of the "studio audience" and asking questions.

Because of its reading level this lesson is best suited to high intermediate to advanced learners of English. (In fact, the class should be encouraged to study and use the new vocabulary they meet in the articles.) Rehearsal should be encouraged and video taping the final performance adds intensity to the experience.

The simulation works well for students who are reluctant to speak "on their own," as it provides another identity, much like a mask.

Happy explorations!

STUART P. SALOMON
Jakarta, Indonesia

5–10 Minutes for Understanding

Dear Editor:

During my teaching years, I noticed that teachers were always busy concentrating on the syllabus, their aim being to finish it in one way or another. In doing this, teachers neglect their students' social and psychological needs, which cause students to fail in spite of the good methods that the teachers may be using.

The teacher's limited time prevents him from talking to his students separately to discuss their problems. I found it necessary to devote "5 to 10 minutes" to giving my students an opportunity to write down their problems. What's the procedure?

In Appreciation

Dear Editor:

For more than 25 years I have been receiving *Forum*, and I still read it with enthusiasm. I read in the last issue, volume 32, number 1, January 1994, that Anne Covell Newton is retiring. I would like to express my thanks for the wonderful job she has done. I feel sure that the high standards that *Forum* has maintained over the years will be kept. For a practising teacher of the English language, *Forum* is invaluable.

LEONARD CARUANA
Madrid, Spain

Dear Editor:

The news of Mrs. Newton's retirement came to me as a surprise but not a shock. Age has its own story to tell. Mrs. Newton's achievements were quite remarkable. It was her hard labour that made *Forum* an enjoyable magazine.

The January '94 issue of the *Forum* was extremely interesting. I liked the editorial notes on Atlanta and Martin Luther King, Jr. It is a coincidence that I was the first Indian to write a book on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. My book, written in Bengali, received praises, and the Library of Congress purchased several copies. More than 25 years have passed since its publication and things must have changed greatly in the southern part of North America. The white identity and the black identity have now given way to the American identity.

Living in a country of great divides—the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs, the Christians—and the divisions getting wider day by day—I feel that the time is now ripe for the rest of the world to explore the American example.

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